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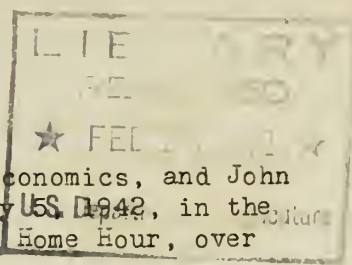
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1942

H2R11

Feb 5, 1942

All Metals are Precious



A broadcast by Miss Ruth Van Deman, Bureau of Home Economics, and John Baker, Office of Information, broadcast Thursday, February 5, 1942, in the Department of Agriculture period of the National Farm and Home Hour, over stations associated with the Blue Network.

--ooOoo--

JOHN BAKER

Here we are around to the home front again. And here's Ruth Van Deman-- Officer of the Day for the home economics battalion. Read out the marching orders, Major.

RUTH VAN DEMAN

Sorry, "Colonel" but we're not marching today.

JOHN BAKER

Not marching. What is this, mutiny?

RUTH VAN DEMAN

No, sir, far from it. The home front stands united for victory. But we have a non-marching task to do today. The orders are to scrub and scour-- rub and polish.

JOHN BAKER

They say it another way in the British Army. Anyway, it sounds as though you're cleaning up for inspection.

RUTH VAN DEMAN

Cleaning for conservation. Longer life for pots and pans is our slogan. And by pots and pans we mean every metal article around the home from the toaster, to the tongs, to the tin dipper.

JOHN BAKER

I see, you believe all metals are precious just now - in view of our enormous need for metals for military purposes.

RUTH VAN DEMAN

I gather that's the way the war Production Board sees it. And I gather they regard the woman who takes extra good care of the metal articles around her house a very practical patriot.

JOHN BAKER

How about the man-of-the-house who gets down his repair kit and fixes a new handle on the old lettle or smooths the dents out of a battered saucepan?

RUTH VAN DEMAN

He'll probably get a leather medal from the woman-of-the-house right on the spot.

(over)

JOHN BAKER

Careful how you go appropriating good leather. It's a valuable material too in wartime.

RUTH VAN DEMAN

In fact it's hard to put the finger on anything we use that isn't in the strategic materials class at present. If it doesn't place there because of the raw materials used, then it does because of the factory space and man-hours it represents in the making. That's why it's so important to scrub and scour and rub and polish by the right method. Take aluminum, for example-

JOHN BAKER

Fine steel wool's the best thing to take the stains off aluminum.

RUTH VAN DEMAN

Fine steel wool or a fine scouring powder that has no alkali in it. Alkali has a chemical reaction with aluminum that turns it dark.

JOHN BAKER

If you use that chemical action in reverse - that is, put a weak acid on aluminum, you can dissolve the stain off.

RUTH VAN DEMAN

Right. If you're shy on elbow grease you can brighten an aluminum pan by boiling it in water with vinegar or cream of tartar added. And by the way, so far as scientific research can discover, there's no harm to the body from the minute amount of aluminum that dissolves from cooking utensils into food.

JOHN BAKER

Thanks, Ruth. I'm glad to have you clarify that point. I hear it discussed every now and then.

RUTH VAN DEMAN

And the reaction between alkali and aluminum has another elbow-grease saving use in cleaning silver.

JOHN BAKER

The electrolytic method, you mean.

RUTH VAN DEMAN

Yes, an old aluminum pan - one no longer good enough to cook in - a teaspoon of salt and a teaspoon of baking soda to each quart of water - bring the water to the boil, drop the silver in, piece by piece. And in a few seconds the tarnish will begin to disappear from the silver.

JOHN BAKER

And reappear on the surface of the aluminum pan. --- You forgot to say, Ruth, that the aluminum pan must be bright to start with.

RUTH VAN DEMAN

Yes, otherwise this demonstration in physics and chemistry won't work. You can do the same thing with a sheet of aluminum or zinc in an enamel-ware pan.

JOHN BAKER

Isn't this same electrolytic principle used when silver is plated?

RUTH VAN DEMAN

Yes, I believe it is.

JOHN BAKER

I should think this way of cleaning silver would gradually take the plating off.

RUTH VAN DEMAN

It does. But so does rubbing it with a paste polish and a chamois. Silver's a soft metal. You're bound to wear it down some every time you take off the tarnish. The main objection to this way of boiling the tarnish off is that the surface has a rather dull, "mossy" look. But you can give it a soft luster, if not a bright shine, by polishing with a soft dry cloth after the silver's washed in soapsuds and rinsed in clean hot water.

JOHN BAKER

The main point in cleaning any metal, as I understand it, is to use a cleaner adapted to that particular metal, and be sure it's one that doesn't scratch or eat into the surface anymore than necessary.

RUTH VAN DEMAN

And that goes for enameled ironware and for sinks and plumbing fixtures. We've got more white bath tubs and kitchen sinks per capita than any nation in the world. But we aren't very careful about keeping the hard glaze on the surface. We scour it off with harsh, scratching powders, and then wonder why the tub doesn't look clean.

JOHN BAKER

Once gone there's no way to get it back, that's sure.

Well, on this metal question in the war effort, there's another way home-makers can help it seems to me, besides this good care you've stressed. Ruth, another way to make articles last longer.

RUTH VAN DEMAN

What's that?

JOHN BAKER

The tin situation is tight - anyway you look at it. And besides its use in war material, the War Production Board recognizes the need to reserve a certain amount for containers for canned vegetables and meats...especially for supplies shipped to our armed forces and our allies. Already the Board has cut in half the amount of tin normally used for packaging baking powder, cereals, coffee, spices, and a lot of other things on the pantry shelf.

RUTH VAN DEMAN

I think I see what you're getting at, John. You're suggesting that we buy our food nearer its natural state when we can - that is, fresh or at least "untinned."

JOHN BAKER

Right. I appreciate that mid-winter isn't any easy time to switch to fresh fruits and vegetables instead of canned, for the northern part of the country. But every pound of fresh that can be used will help to conserve tin.

VAN DEMAN

Smoked ham in its dry rind, instead of ham cooked and skinned and done up in a tin can, would help too.

BAKER

Yes. The canned cured meats are needed for shipment abroad. And we have plenty of dry beans for home consumption too.

VAN DEMAN

A Bostonian, John, will tell you that he never gave up his custom of Saturday night -- Sunday morning baked beans.

BAKER

I knew there was something that gave ballast to those Bostonians.

VAN DEMAN

On this subject of tin cans, John, there's something that puzzles a lot of us --- that question of can or cannot the tin cans be salvaged.

BAKER

For their tin?

VAN DEMAN

Yes.

BAKER

I understand not--that is, profitably. The coating of tin on the sheet steel in a tin can is so thin that by the time it is remelted and separated from the other metal the expense is prohibitive.

VAN DEMAN

Really puts the tin in the class of precious metal.

BAKER

Probably more so than silver, I understand.

VAN DEMAN

I've had many inquiries too about the metal lids for glass jars for home canning and all canning supplies. They want assurance that they'll have containers to can in if they grow extra vegetables next summer.

BAKER

That point is being taken up with the priorities people right now. The final word hasn't come through, and I can't promise anything. But I believe the War Production Board will make an announcement sometime soon.

VAN DEMAN

Well, I know what I'd be doing these February evenings if I had a good garden spot on a farm.

BAKER

Reading the seed catalogues, I bet, and planning so many rows of string beans --- so many rows of carrots.

VAN DEMAN

Peas first, John. Peas to plant as soon as the frost is out of the ground. Peas to shell on the back porch next June. Peas to eat --- sweet as sugar -- a big dish full of them, with bread and butter for supper.

BAKER

Wake up, Ruth. This is only February. - But they do look good in the seed catalog - and they taste good, too. Thanks for those metal-saving suggestions, Ruth. See you again next week.

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